

Date: 21 April 2016
Our ref: 182897
Your ref: -



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BY EMAIL ONLY
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Dear Mr Anelay

Further updated HRA of North Somerset Core Strategy

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 05 April 2016 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

We have considered the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) screening report and are satisfied that the Council has undertaken an appropriately detailed and systematic assessment of the North Somerset Core Strategy, in terms of its likely effect on European Sites, both within and beyond the administrative area.

In particular we are satisfied that the HRA shows that the Core Strategy is not likely to result in significant effects on the North Somerset & Mendip Bat Special Area of Conservation or on the Severn Estuary Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar site, which are the two Natura 2000 sites identified as being of most relevance to the Plan.

In reaching our view we have taken particular note of the following points:

- The HRA has identified the need for a more detailed assessment of the emerging Site Allocations Plan, particularly regarding the potential for effects of development on bats associated with the North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC. Natural England will be consulted on this in due course.
- The HRA recognises that the Council needs to produce guidance for new development with the potential to impact on the North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC. Natural England has funded initial bat mapping work to inform the guidance and we look forward to progressing this with the Council at the earliest opportunity.
- The HRA confirms the need for implementation of any mitigation measures that are identified for the proposed England coastal path within North Somerset, with respect to avoiding potential recreational impacts on the Severn Estuary SPA/Ramsar site. Natural England is in the process of agreeing the route of the path through North Somerset and is identifying any mitigation measures that might be necessary, particularly for those sections where a new right of access will be created.

With the above in mind, we consider the Council's conclusion that the North Somerset Core Strategy will not have a significant effect European Sites, either on its own or in combination with other plans, is reasonable and can therefore be screened out from further stages of assessment.

England Coast Path

With respect to the England Coast Path; once approval for a coastal access report is received from the Secretary of State, preparations are made on the ground and the necessary paperwork is completed, the new public rights come into force on the stretch.

During this stage the access authority:

- Typically undertakes any 'establishment works' necessary to make the trail fit for use as the England Coast Path, and to enable users of it to be clear and confident about its alignment on the ground;
- Implements any specific informal management measures proposed in Natural England's report needed to protect sensitive features.

We have attached further details of the England Coast Path scheme in our covering email, but would be pleased to advise the Council further regarding the coast path in due course.

For any queries relating to the advice in this letter only please contact me on 07900 608311. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Grundy
Somerset, Avon & Wiltshire Area Team